A LIVABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR WILDLIFE IS A QUALITY ENVIRONMENT FOR MAN

Montana Outdoors

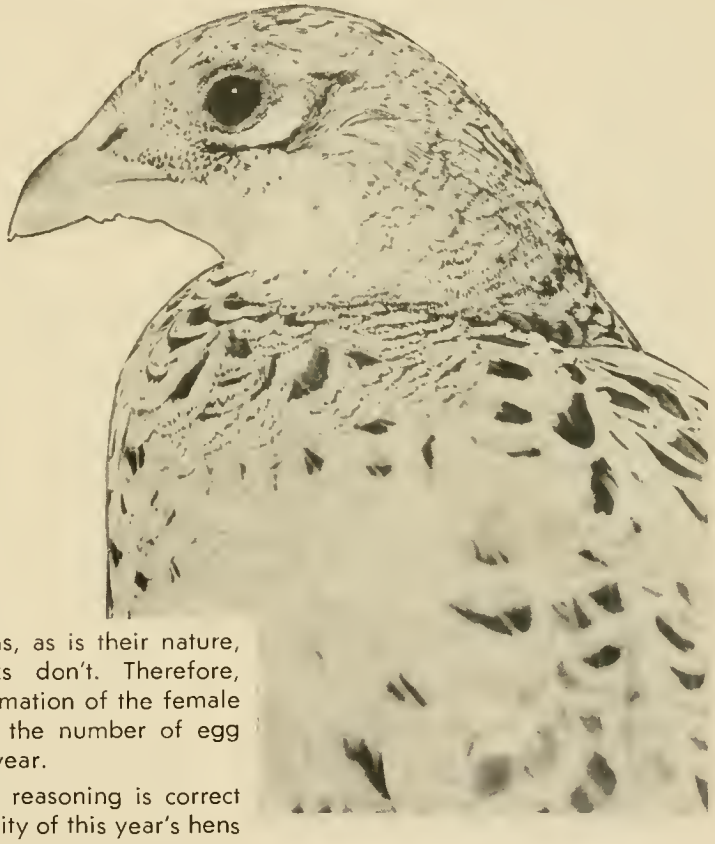
VOLUME V — NO. 7 MONTANA FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT JULY. 1970

HEN PHEASANT HUNTING!

Blaspheme or Biology?

By Charles Eustace

Few birds have generated the righteous indignation associated with hen shooting as has the pheasant. Hen pheasants have been partially or wholly granted asylum during the hunting season for various and sundry reasons. Each reason, regardless of heritage, origin or creditibility, is founded on one basic indisputable fact: any hunter, even the color blind, can distinguish between a flushing hen and cock pheasant on the basis of plumage alone. That statement can be made for no other North American upland game bird.



Let's scrutinize some of the reasons we hear for cocks only hunting in view of present biological knowledge.

Reason: The pheasant is polygamous, that is a single cock mates with several hens. Mother Nature, bless her buttons, has usually arranged for polygamous animals to have distinctively marked males making it easy for hunters to selectively harvest the surplus.

Fallacy: Enter — wild turkey, ruffed grouse, sage grouse, sharptailed grouse, all have polygamous males none of which are distinctively marked during the hunting season. Consider the exhilarating challenge of aerial bird sex identification during a cocks only grouse season.

Reason: Hens, as is their nature, lay eggs, cocks don't. Therefore, thoughtless decimation of the female sex will reduce the number of egg layers for next year.

Fallacy: This reasoning is correct only if the majority of this year's hens live long enough to nest next year. Hens however, are no more immune to a good clobbering from Mother Nature than are cocks. Only a given number will survive to nest next year. That number is determined by the quality of their habitat, cover and food, not by the generosity of cock shooting.

Pheasants from birth to death are subject to many kinds of mortality resulting in an annual turnover rate in the neighborhood of 70%. Mortality may come from weather, accidents, disease, predation, hunting and other causes. Fortunately, Mom Nature in her esteemed wisdom has made mortality factors compensatory. That is, high mortality due to weather is compensated for by lower mortality from predation or accidents. Since hunting is a type of mortality, high hunting mortality is compensated for by lower losses from other kinds of mortality. In actuality, hunting hens does not reduce the number of breed-

Even the color blind hunter can distinguish between a hen and cock pheasant on the basis of plumage alone. This can not be said of any other North American upland game bird.

ing hens the following year, it simply reduces the number of hens encountering their demise at the hands of other types of mortality.

Reason: Pheasants, as other animals, suffer periodic depressions. Therefore, much of the time we can use all the pheasants we can keep.

Fallacy: When animal densities (either feathered or furred), decrease, survivial increases. More young are raised by fewer adults. In southeastern Montana "Game Paradise of the Plains," hen hunting has been in vogue since the early 60's. Pheasant populations remained high until the mid-60's when they took a tumble. Overhunting of hens? No! Ma Nature, in a moment of cynical perversion, sent the rugged winter of 1964-65. Cock and hen alike succumbed to her harsh hibernal blasts, with largest losses noted in areas of poorest habitat. Pheasant hunting had been dealt a blow below the belt.

The summer following the 1964-65 catastrophy produced the largest pheasant broods on record—nature's way of compensating for unusually severe population losses. This biological phenomen carries a weighty label: summer gains (young produced), are inversely proportional to spring densities (breeding population). As the population recouped its losses, the average brood size decreased. This is shown in the following table.

Effect of Severe Population Losses on Survival of Young

YEAR	NO. OF YOUNG/BROOD	
1964	7.2	Before Severe Winter
1965	8.5	After Severe Winter
1966	7.9	
1967	7.5	
1968	7.2	
1969	6.2	

Reason: Shooting hens is a sure way to ruin pheasant hunting eventually.

Fallacy: Shooting hens actually improves pheasant hunting. Ponder the following effects wrought by harvesting the feathered egg factory on the Kinsey Irrigation Project and other areas in southeast Montana. During the five years prior to hen seasons (1955-59), hunters harvested an average of 107 birds per 100 hunters. For the five years after the opening of hen seasons (1960-64), hunters harvested an average of 115 birds per 100 hunters and in roughly half the time. Before hen seasons, hunters spent an average of 3.2 hours for every bird bagged versus 1.8 hours per bird after hen seasons.

Ironically, sweet "Ol" Mum Nature had creamed the pheasant with her winter whim far more severely than the most perverted hen shooter. The 1965 harvest was mediocre district wide with only 59 birds bagged per 100 hunters. Even though hen seasons were continued on a low population, hunting success improved steadily with 77 birds bagged per 100 hunters in 1966, and 121 birds per 100 hunters in 1967, 145 birds per 100 hunters in 1968 and 112 birds per 100 hunters in 1969. The lower 1969 success was presumably due to freezing temperatures and falling snow on opening day of the hunting season.

It appears that the only justification for a cocks only season is that we can tell a cock from a hen, and this is weak justification at best. Few hunters refrain from shooting hen turkeys and grouse just because they can't tell them from cocks.

In short, pheasants face no basic problem not faced by other upland game birds. If we are searching for an answer to improve upland game bird hunting, let's forget the hen kick and look at the crux of the problem; habitat. The recent ecology bandwagon explosion should make one thing clear even to the most dubious observer. The success with which life perpetuates itself, animal and plant, is directly correlated to the quality of the environment upon which it is dependent for all the necessities of life. If we provide quality habitat, Mother Nature will provide quality hunting, all our good intentions and save the hen slogans not withstanding.

MONTANA OUTDOORS

Published monthly by the Montana Fish and Game Dept., Mitchell Building, 125 Roberts St., Helena, Montana 59601.

Second class postage rates paid at Helena, Montana 59601.

Edited by Vernon Craig

SILT POLLUTION KILLS TROUT

By Pat Marcuson

Montana fishermen are mostly trout fishermen, and in general prefer to fish in streams. When large numbers of trout suddenly turn belly-up in a stream, people are concerned. The source and type of pollution causing the kill is usually easily located. The damage is usually done and the pollutant washed away, a one-shot event. Several million fish are reported killed by pollution in United States waters each year. Over half have been killed as a result of water pollution from municipalities, industry has accounted for one-third, and agricultural operations have been next in line.

Another serious problem and one frequently ignored is the former trout stream where pollutants don't cause trout kills because there are no trout left to kill. Montanans have grown up and become conditioned to streams which have been accumulating pollution for many years. Pollutants often go unnoticed where there are no fish kills; consequently, some very potent loads can be camouflaged in these abused waters.

Silt is the most common enemy of these abused streams and probably the most damaging. In Montana, silt is regarded as the most prevalent type of water pollutant and has probably accounted for more trout loss than any other. Like all pollution, it needs attention — it needs to be abated, and it can be!

Sediment affects trout both directly and indirectly. Direct effects include: scale damage and irritation of skin, eyes, nasal orifices and gills. These direct irritations often trigger secondary reactions such as slime production on the affected anatomy. The indirect effects are usually more critical to the trout's welfare. Included are: reduced or eliminated food supply, reduced or eliminated reproduction, and reduced visibility.

Overuse of agricultural lands is the usual cause of heavy silting of Montana waters. Silt in the form of valuable top soil is lost from production, deters recreation, alters economics, raises problems with water supplies, reduces a food resource, affects the temperature regimen, fills harbors, and alters the hydrologic relationships between droughts and floods.

A study was undertaken on Bluewater Creek near Fromberg, Montana in May, 1960 to measure effects of sediment, discharge and water temperature on trout populations, bottom fauna, and trout egg incubation.

Bluewater Creek originates from a series of springs with a constant temperature, travels 13 miles and dumps into the Clark Fork of the Yellowstone River. The suspended sediment load in the upper reaches of Bluewater averages 0.7 tons/day with maximum loads of 2.5 tons/day compared to an average 76 tons/day with loads up to 900 tons/day in lower Bluewater Creek. During winter months, when no water is diverted from Bluewater Creek, there is little fluctuation in the rate of flow. Water levels fluctuate during the irrigating season. Sediment concentrations are smallest upstream and increase progressively downstream. In association with the larger sediment concentrations in the lower stream areas there is a marked increase in physical deterioration of water quality, stream banks, and aesthetical value of the area.

All measurements to date have shown the detrimental effects of sediment on trout egg survival ,fish food supply, and on trout populations. In the clean headwaters of Bluewater Creek, brown trout represent almost the entire fish population. There is a progressive decrease in brown trout and an increase in rough fish from the headwaters to Bluewater's confluence with the Clark Fork. Sampling showed that survival of trout eggs was nearly 100% successful in the headwaters and totally unsuccessful at the mouth. Sucker eggs survived throughout the drainage.

Large and small sources of sediment can be easily located all along the creek. Some common agricultural practices which cause stream siltation include: overgrazing the floodplain and watershed, row crop production, bank trampling by livestock, inefficient irrigation ditches, over-irrigating crops, silt-laden return flows, waste water, crop production up to and crowding the immediate streambanks, vegetation removal and channel realignment. The total effect can

Trampling of streambanks and destruction of streambank vegetation by livestock contributes to streambank erosion.

add up to large accumulations of moving soil.

Three streambank improvement projects were developed in the spring of 1966. A pipeline was installed to control erosion from a waste-water ditch. Several hundred feet of eroded streambank were lined with rock riprapping, and as part of the fishing access program, approximately 100 acres involving one-half mile of stream was fenced to keep cattle off the banks. Financing these projects was shared by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and Montana Fish and Game Department. The projects were engineered by the Soil Conservation Service.

During the period, 1960 to 1966, the average sediment load was 27 tons per day at the sampling area immediately downstream from the streambank improvements. After improvements and through 1968, the sediment load was reduced to 13 tons per day below the improvements—a 52% reduction. Six miles downstream from the improvement projects at Station 4, the sediment load reduced 44%. Fish production sampled by electrofishing revealed a substantial improvement in the fish population structure after streambank improvement projects.

Farming right up to streambanks often contributes to streambank erosion and siltation of streams.

Bluewater Creek is a model, a study dealing with a serious problem of Montana's fish resource and human resource. The scope of the study will, hopefully, bring more abatement of silt pollution and help establish procedures for assisting and encouraging landowners to participate in good basic conservation practices. **Sediment pollution can be controlled.**

RECREATION AREA PLANNING

By Don Hyppa

In some places, recreationists are arriving in numbers great enough to threaten the very environment they seek to enjoy. We Montanans are anxious to share our abundant out-of-doors, but to protect our land and at the same time provide for the needs of people, adequate and proper recreational facilities must be provided. In the Treasure State, the Montana Fish and Game Commission is the agency responsible for developing outdoor recreation areas to their optimum use. This use must be consistent with the recreational demand of the region yet limited in intensity of use to preserve the park environment and to protect existing natural resources.

One function of the Fish and Game Department's Recreation and Parks Division is to coordinate the planning effort required to develop recreation sites to their optimum use while keeping the quality controls in mind. In the development of an outdoor recreation area be it a small river access or a large state park, the planning effort leading from an unimproved piece of real estate to a completed facility ready for public use may often be long and complex. To achieve the desired results, a multi-staged planning process is usually necessary. Following is a resume of some possible considerations and problems to be solved in developing typical sites. Not all of the steps listed are necessary for the planning and development of **every** site. Some are irrelevant—others have been predetermined. Quite

The Missouri River Recreation Road is a unique type of development planned to utilize a partially abandoned road with access to outstanding recreation potential.

often, one or more phases have been consolidated or the work on them accomplished simultaneously.

1. The first step in planning a recreational development is to determine where the demand for such a facility exists. Generally, the demand is almost everywhere or wherever suitable land can be acquired, especially near water. However, a knowledge of the local needs for the entire state can be used to determine priorities.

To determine demand, or more specifically the unsatisfied demand, the Fish and Game Department with the help of many other agencies developed a Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan. A voluminous, frequently updated statistical manual, the plan inventories existing facilities (federal, state and local and private); projects current and probable future recreation needs for each of the seven planning regions of the state; and recommends an action program to meet these demands. Priorities have been assigned based upon the magnitude of the demand for specific facilities.

2. Next, an informal inventory is taken of the resources of a proposed site. From this evaluation, it can be determined how the site may best satisfy a portion of the recreation demand in that vicinity.

3. After the ground is acquired, a long-range master plan is developed for the site. It usually includes base maps, photographs, resource evaluation, recommendations for type of use, intensity of use, kinds and numbers of facilities, recommended expansion.

During the drafting of such a plan, care must be taken to preserve the site's natural beauty. Features of geological, archeological, historic or other unusual interest must be protected but also made available and interpreted for the visitors. The visitors' desires should be anticipated so that development allows them to do what they want to do within the limits of what the site or other users can comfortably endure. It is important to know such things as where the visitors come from and in what numbers, what they drive and camp in, how long they are likely to stay and what services they require.

One must predict trends in kinds and amounts of future use. For instance, the recent marketing of fold-out tent trailers and pickup campers and the increased popularity of the travel trailer influence road and parking area design. New highway locations or standards and new industrial development or growth of local population centers have their effects on recreational use. There are many other factors.

Architecture of shelter at Madison Buffalo Jump is designed to harmonize with the surrounding terrain. Interpretive plaques explain features of the jump complex which are visible from this commanding viewpoint.

4. After broad guidelines of the master plan have been accepted, detailed facility design and construction drawings and specifications must be prepared. During this phase, one often must solve special problems involving solid waste and sewage disposal, domestic water supply and electrical service, access or lack of it and natural nuisances such as flooding.

If the area is of natural, historic or other significance, complete and separate interpret facility design is needed. Library research or other special help may be required to do a proper job.

5. Cost estimating is the next logical step so budgeting can be planned realistically. The stage construction schedule necessary to fit budget limitations can, at this time, be projected.

6. Construction projects can now be offered for bid. Because of Montana's short construction season, timing is critical.

During the construction phase, much supervision is required. Of particular importance, is the protection of natural features during building. Regardless of the caution exercised, site restoration and relandscaping after construction are almost always necessary. Special care must be taken to insure that **natural** beauty is restored. The **landscaped** look is not the objective.

7. During the construction stage, it is invariably necessary to make slight changes or field adjustments on the ground. For this reason, the drafting of as-built plans is necessary. This should be done immediately after the construction before changes are forgotten or traces of underground facilities have been obliterated.

8. Finally, one can always look forward to the preparatins for later stage construction of unanticipated plan changes. These are due to changes in use pattern, unanticipated opportunity for expansion and numerous other possibilities.

Of the many planning stages which may be necessary, each requires one or more fields of expertise. The help of statisticians, ecologists, recreation planners, interpretive specialists, archeologists, geologists, historians, landscape architects, architects-engineers, draftsmen and writers are often needed.

Sometimes the wheels of state agencies appear to turn, and sometimes do turn, too slowly. Often people wonder why there is such a time lag between the announcement of a land acquisition or development project and the opening of a facility for use—or, why so many trips to the site by so many different people driving yellow cars are necessary. Hopefully, this discussion has helped answer these and other frequent questions.

MONTANA'S MOST-FISHED LAKE

By Liter Spence

Many people ask, "Where's the best fishing lake around here?" Often we give a hesitant answer because there are many good lakes available for fishing and because each fisherman has a personal preference. So, we often answer such questions by explaining that the most "popular" fishing lake in the state is the 3,000 acre fish-producer near Anaconda called Georgetown Lake. Based on current fishing pressure surveys, Georgetown Lake receives the most fishing pressure of any lake in Montana.

A view of Georgetown Lake near Anaconda, the most-fished lake in Montana.

According to our mail fishing pressure survey, Georgetown Lake sustains about 81,000 fishermen days per year. This is just under four percent of the total fishing pressure for the entire state and makes Georgetown the most heavily fished lake in Montana. At the same time, the winter catch rate is phenomenally high for lake or reservoir fishing. The catch rate this past winter was 1.4 fish per hour. An estimated 15,000 fishing trips were made to the lake during the 1969-1970 winter fishing season. This past winter 83 percent of the fish caught were rainbow trout and 14 percent were salmon (mostly kokanee). The balance were cutthroat trout, brook trout and grayling. Over the past 10 years, the summer catch rate have varied from 0.4 to 0.8 fish per hour—still excellent for lake fishing. Since there is very little rainbow trout reproduction in the lake, the fishery relies primarily on hatchery plants.

Georgetown has gained this reputation through years of interesting history as a good fish producer. However, it all started way back when Georgetown was not a lake at all! This is the story.

In 1894 the Bi-Metallic Mining Company of Philipsburg built a small dam on Flint Creek just about on the Granite-Deer Lodge County line, about 18 miles west of the town of Anaconda. The purpose of the dam was to supply water for their smelting operations at Philipsburg. A large hay meadow with practically no timber was flooded. The surrounding area was quite heavily timbered with lodgepole pine. In 1900 or 1901 this storage facility was purchased by the Anaconda Company, which needed the stored water for winter use at their copper smelter in Anaconda. During 1901, the Montana Power Company constructed a power house below the dam to supplement their power system in this locality.

In 1919, the lake was enlarged somewhat by the addition of five feet to the height of the dam, and in the 1940's the dam was strengthened so the water level could be raised another three feet. The final result of this activity was Georgetown Lake, a lake of about 3,000 acres with an average depth of 11 feet. The deepest part of the lake is in the old stream channel near the dam, approximately 40 feet deep. Only 10 percent of the lake is deeper than 25 feet. The capacity of the lake is 30,570 acre-feet of water at an elevation of 6429.5 feet above sea level. The shallowness of the lake results in excellent fish production. However, this shallowness also results in extensive aquatic weed beds which, coupled with the prolonged period of ice cover at this elevation, leads to the possibility of oxygen depletion under the ice and, in turn, winterkill of fish.

In all probability there were native cutthroat trout in Flint Creek before the lake was formed, and they flourished under the new conditions. The Montana Fish and Game Department introduced grayling from waters east of the Continental Divide into the lake on July 2, 1912. Fishing reports of old timers tell us that the grayling flourished and were removed by the burlap-bag-full by those who would drive to the lake with their teams and wagons. The first plant of cutthroat thout was in 1913. Records do not reveal the source of the eggs. These two populations of fish thrived together in the relatively shallow water in which there was a very heavy production of plankton due to the flooding of the fertile bottom land.

The Anaconda Fish Hatchery (now called Washoe Park Trout Hatchery) was established in 1909, and brook trout eggs were the first eggs available by shipments from eastern states. In 1919 fish spawning traps were installed in Stuart Mill Creek and Flint Creek, and in 1920 eggs were taken from brook trout that had been introduced into the lake by the Department in 1915. The fish traps operated continually until the mid-1950's.

Brook trout populations in the lake did not flourish due to the poor spawning conditions in the lake. Flint Creek was dry in the fall of the year when brook trout spawn and eggs from that species, which were taken from the traps in Stuart Mill Creek, were used in other waters.

Whitefish were introduced in 1913 but did not flourish. However, reports were received in later years of an occasional whitefish being caught from the lake, indicating some spawning success.

Rainbow trout were first intro-

duced into the lake in 1912, and then replanted in 1919, 1920 and 1921. Early records show that steelhead rainbow were planted in 1924. These grew to an enormous size, but it was found that they were crossing with the cutthroat trout and producing hybreds. Action was taken in 1929 to remove them from the lake. As these large fish came into the fish traps, they were removed and hauled to neighboring waters. Some of them weighed as much as 17 pounds.

Beginning about 1929 it was the general opinion of fish culturists that new blood should be added to the cutthroat population of the lake. Eggs were ultimately secured from Lake Tahoe, Nevada; later Henrys Lake, Idaho; and Yellowstone Lake in Yellowstone Park for introduction into the lake. By 1930 Georgetown Lake had reached its peak cutthroat egg production, but apparently at the expense of the grayling population since egg production that year was very low for that species. Consequently grayling eggs were secured from Rogers Lake near Kalispell for the purpose of bringing back the grayling population in Georgetown Lake.

During the winter of 1936-1937 the lake level was pumped down nearly nine feet for water use at the Anaconda smelter. This low water level created adverse conditions which resulted in a severe winterkill of fish. Thousands of dead fish washed up on the lake shore after the ice went off.

Prior to the winterkill, Georgetown Lake fishing was renowned for large cutthroat and grayling. Cutthroat weighing four pounds or more were common. Following the disastrous winter of 1937, sucker and redside shiner populations increased greatly. Control measures were attempted and then abandoned. Heavy plantings of cutthroat fry and fingerlings were made during the next six years with unsatisfactory results. Then a program of planting larger fingerling trout was undertaken. Good fishing was subsequently re-established. Apparently the larger trout fingerlings were needed to overcome competition and predation by nongame species.

Planting of rainbow was again initiated about 1943, along with the grayling and cutthroat plants. Coho (silver) salmon were stocked again from 1946-1955 (they were probably first planted in the lake in the 1920's). By the late 1940's fishing was again spectacular, with rainbow and coho predominating the catch. Fish up to 12 pounds were creeled with the average 4-5 pounds.

Winter and summer, fishermen of all ages flock to Georgetown Lake.

In the early 1950's the size of fish creeled became smaller, apparently due to increased fishing pressure and harvest. Recalling the days of "lunker" cutthroat trout fishing, sportsmen insisted on a return to cutthroat plants. In 1955 and 1956 cutthroat were the only trout species planted. Both cutthroat and rainbow trout were experimentally planted from 1957 through 1961. A decline in interest in the cutthroat by local fishermen plus the fact that the rainbow grew faster and made a better contribution to the creel than the cutthroat, prompted the Department to abandon cutthroat stocking in the lake in 1962, and none have been planted since.

Grayling were stocked in 1958 but were again introduced in 1966 and a few are being caught at the present time. Kokanee (land-locked sockeye salmon) were probably introduced in 1954 from nearby Silver Lake or were the result of an unauthorized plant. Coho salmon were last stocked in 1967 and 1968 and are presently being caught.

The present stocking program calls for 350,000 4- to 6-inch rainbow trout to be planted annually. These are planted promptly after the ice goes off the lake in the spring to allow the fish to feed on the blooms of zooplankton (tiny, weakly-swimming animals) which occur at this time. The fish grow to catchable size by late fall. Rainbow are presently the "bread and butter" fish in Georgetown Lake. The lake is managed for this species even though brook trout, grayling, kokanee, silver salmon and an occasional cutthroat trout are caught.

The three important elements of the Georgetown Lake fishery are species, rate of catch, and size of fish caught. Rainbow trout are the favorite with the angler, grow well in the lake and are readily raised in hatcheries to the 4 to 6 inch planting size required for Georgetown Lake.

The rate of catch and size of fish caught are both related to how many trout are planted or, in other words, density of fish in the lake. The size

of fish creeled is also determined by how long they stay in the lake before being caught. This depends on fishing pressure. The average size of rainbow caught during the last winter fishing season was 11 inches and weight was one-half pound. This is believed to be the minimum size which the public will accept from this productive lake. Therefore, the management problem is to regulate the fishery for maximum catch, maintain a good rate of catch, and still maintain the 11-inch, half-pound size. Fishing pressure is increasing on Georgetown Lake each year. Ideally, fish planting should be heavy enough to maintain good catch rates in the face of heavy fishing pressure, but not so heavy as to seriously retard fish growth in the lake.

The present planting rate is considered optimal—i.e., the maximum number that can be planted consistent with good growth. With this at least tentatively established, additional management of the fishery must be based on regulating the harvest. Management measures should be founded on a knowledge of the rate of catch, size of fish being caught, and numbers taken during various seasons.

Georgetown Lake is a productive fishing lake primarily because it has a large, shallow food-producing area. Because of these desirable conditions, Georgetown is subject to a "dying out" process which is being accelerated in lakes in Montana and the nation. This process is called EUTROPHICATION. Lake eutrophication is a natural, long-term process of "growing old." Lakes become more fertile and shallow until they eventually become dry land. This process is faster when too many nutrients are added to the water, usually by human activities.

Deterioration of the fishery is one of the first things to occur during eutrophication and precautions must be taken to prevent this from happening on Georgetown Lake. We must pay particular attention to the prevention of pollution of the waters from both public and private land. As more and more people visit Georgetown the sanitation problems will grow worse. The fishery is dependent on maintaining a suitable aquatic environment. By preserving the lake's life we can continue to have good fishing.

Georgetown Lake arose from meadow land. Care must be taken to prevent its untimely return to such a state, thus losing a popular, or rather, the most popular fishing lake in Montana.

Note: The historical information contained in this article was obtained from "A History of Georgetown Lake" written by Fred Beal, now deceased, and formerly with the Montana Fish and Game Department. The history is undated but was probably written about 1953.

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JULY, 1970